

Message Text

SECRET

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EXDIS

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TAGS: PFOR, MASS, UK, MU, JO

SUBJECT: JORDAN CHIEF OF STAFF EVALUATION OF OMAN WAR

REF: AMMAN 1264, LONDON 2798

1. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT SULTAN QABOOS, AND EQUALLY HIS
BRITISH MILITARY COMMAND, HAVE HIGH REGARD AND HIGH HOPES FOR
THE JORDANIAN SF BATTALION NOW EN ROUTE TO DHOFAR. SHOULD
JORDANIANS INDEED PROVE TO BE REAL TIGERS, SO MUCH THE BETTER.
AS TO WHETHER THIS BATTALION IS BEING ASSIGNED TOO TAME A DUTY,
SEEMS TO US MORE PROFITABLE TO EXAMINE POSSIBLE REASONS WHY
IT IS BEING ASSIGNED, AT LEAST INITIALLY, TO SALALAH-MIDWAY
ROAD "GARRISON" DUTY RATHER THAN INSERTED INTO MORE FIERCELY
CONTESTED WESTERN JABAL REGION. SURELY ONE FACTOR IS THAT
SOME FIRST-HAND ORIENTATION INTO A NEW BATTLE ENVIRONMENT,
ONE THAT DOES NOT RISK HEAVY, REGULAR ENEMY CONTACT AT THE
OUTSET, MAKES SOUND MILITARY SENSE, ESPECIALLY IN SITUATION
WHERE OVERALL
MILITARY TRENDS ARE FAVORABLE AND NO SUDDEN EMERGENCY EXISTS.
SECONDLY, WE SENSE SAF LEADERSHIP IS SOMEWHAT CHAGRINED AT
HAVING ASSIGNED TO GREEN IRANIAN TROOPS IN DECEMBER THE
TOUGH ROOTING-OUT PROCESS IN WESTERN JABAL, A TASK THAT PROVED
FORMIDABLE AND COSTLY TO IRANIAN UNITS (AND ALSO DIFFICULT TO
SAF ITSELF). RESULTANT SOUL-SEACHING AMONG SAF COMMAND MAY
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HAVE LEFT THEM HESITANT ABOUT COMMITTING ANOTHER NEW ALLIED

UNIT TO SUCH RUGGED DUTY AT OUTSET OF ITS DHOFAR TOUR.
IN THIS SENSE WE SUPPORT LONDON'S COMMENT THAT ONCE JORDANIANS
HAVE SHOWN SAF COMMAND THEIR METTLE ON THE SPOT, A MORE ACTIVE
ROLE MAY WELL BE GIVEN THEM.

2. WHILE THERE ARE MOMENTS WHEN WE, TOO, WONDER JUST HOW
VIGOROUSLY AND PERSISTENTLY BRITS IN OMAN ARE PROSECUTING THE
WAR, WE CAUTION AGAINST LEAPING TO ANY HASTY CONCLUSION IN
THIS REGARD. WITHOUT QUESTION, BRITISH INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS,
MILADVISERS AND UNITS IN DHOFAR ARE OPERATING UNDER SOME SORT
OF CAVEAT, WRITTEN OR UNWRITTEN, TO BE PARTICULARLY CAUTIOUS
AND KEEP THEIR HEADS DOWN. WE SUSPECT THIS CAVEAT ARISES FROM
CONCERN LEST UK PRESS AND MEDIA SUDDENLY REPORTED HEAVY UK
CASUALTY LISTS FROM OMAN AND CAUSED PARLIAMENT AND PUBLIC
OPINION AT HOME NOISILY TO DEBATE MERITS OF UK FORCES TAKING
PART IN THIS FAR AWAY STRUGGLE. IN DEFENSE OF BRITISH MILITARY
ROLE AND OPERATIONS HERE, ONE CAN CERTAINLY POINT TO A GROW-
ING CRESCENDO OF SUCCESS, ALBEIT OVER QUITE SOME TIME, IN
REDUCING DIMENSIONS OF ENEMY-HELD AREA, AND TO THE REAL ABILITY
AND DEDICATION OF MANY INDIVIDUAL OFFICERS AND MEN THEY HAVE
ASSIGNED HERE. THEIR SUCCESSES HAVE COME AGAINST AN APPARENTLY
HIGHLY-MOTIVATED AND PHYSICALLY DURABLE HARDCORE BAND OF
GUERRILLA ORGANIZERS AND TRIBESMEN WHO, WHILE PERHAPS ONLY A
FEW HUNDRED STRONG AT THIS POINT, HAVE COLLECTIVELY PROVIDED
FORMIDABLE OPPOSITION WHEREVER THE TERRAIN WAS TO THEIR
ADVANTAGE; THEY MAY PROVE TOUGHER THAN EVER IN THE SHRUNKEN
WESTERN AREA THEY STILL DOMINATE.

3. IT IS HARD FOR US TO ASSESS BEN SHAKER'S REMARKS ABOUT
IRANIAN TROOPS, AS OUR INFORMATION ABOUT THEM HAS COME, LIKE
HIS, FROM SECOND AND EVEN THIRD-HAND SOURCES. IRANIAN COMMAND
AND FORCES IN DHOFAR HAVE CONSISTENTLY SHOWN PENCHANT FOR STICK-
ING TO THEMSELVES, AS WESTERN NEWSMEN HAVE FOUND TO THEIR REGRET.

4. WITH JORDANIANS NOW HERE IN GREATER FORCE THAN BEFORE AND
WITH ACTUAL COMBAT ELEMENTS, EMBASSY WILL ENDEAVOR TO
INCREASE ITS REPORTING OF THEIR ROLE AND PERFORMANCE IN DHOFAR.
AS OUR ACCESS TO DHOFAR MILITARY SCENE AT OTHER END OF COUNTRY
NECESSARILY IS VERY LIMITED, WE WILL GO AT THIS MAINLY IN COURSE
OF OUR REGULAR BRIEFINGS FROM AND CONVERSATIONS WITH SAF

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HEADQUARTERS PERSONNEL AND OTHER SOURCES IN MUSCAT.
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